UNICEF
Learning Pioneers Programme

Keynote: Education for human flourishing in the age of AI

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Michael Stevenson is a global leader in education innovation. He founded and led the OECD High Performing Systems for Tomorrow initiative, publishing the Education for human flourishing framework in November 2025.

Michael's focus is now on implementing Education for human flourishing. He continues to lead the OECD inter-governmental Flourishing dialogues, has founded the Institute of Human Flourishing at Wellington College in England and is the Senior Adviser to the International Baccalaureate.



Education for Human Flourishing

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UNICEF

5th October 2026

OECD



High Performing Systems for Tomorrow

Australia

British Columbia

Estonia

Finland

Germany

Singapore

United Kingdom

The Human Capital Theory of education

Sorting young people by cognitive examination for jobs in yesterday's economy

Contributing to a crisis of mental health

Inadequate to the future: regenerative economies, participative democracy, culture and consciousness

Future system principles

Education should offer new ways of seeing, sensing and interpreting the world, in ways that reconcile competing beliefs and values, re-build meaning in people's lives and restore well-being.

Education should provide opportunity and fulfilment for everyone, respecting and nurturing a broader range of strengths, including dispositions for caring and creativity.

Education should equip people to design and establish the next set of economic, societal and organisational models.



Aristotle on human flourishing

Happiness

Friendship

Meaning

Accomplishment

Education for human flourishing

Prepares people to pursue moral, reason-infused, emotionally driven, activities that are meaningful to the individual and have some consequence in the world; encourages contemplation; and inspires awe-struck enchantment

Reconciles education for human flourishing with education for student well-being

Drawing on Ubuntu, Confucianism and Buddhism, underlines the importance of caring for and about others. The crisis of the planet extends these obligations. First, it insists on our responsibilities to other living species. Second, it prompts us to consider future lives.

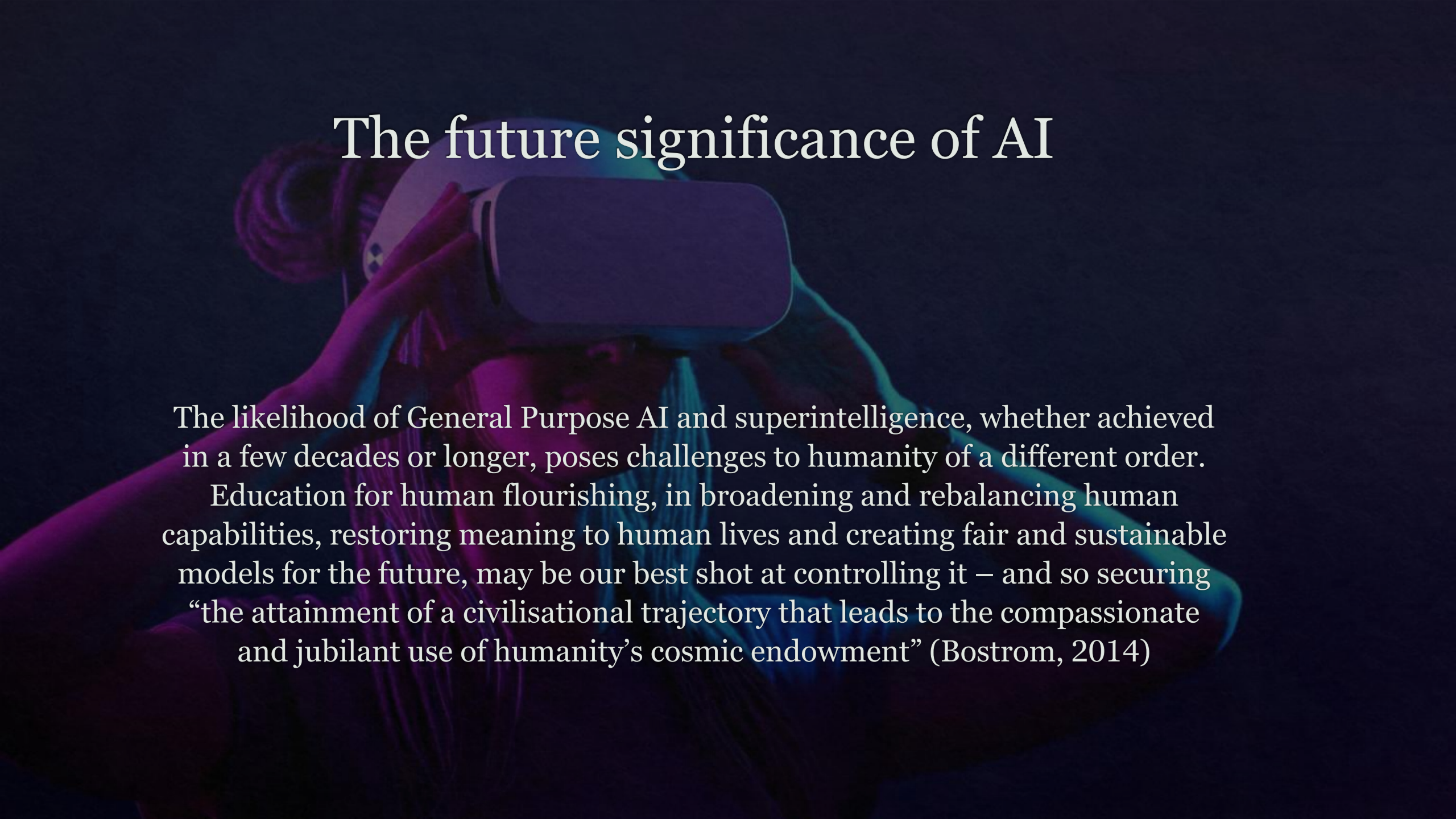
The near-term significance of AI

What will it mean to be human? AI systems could relieve us of humdrum tasks that demand our time and attention, from shopping to diary management. But at the same time, the automation of our personal lives could further undermine self-worth, identity and meaning.

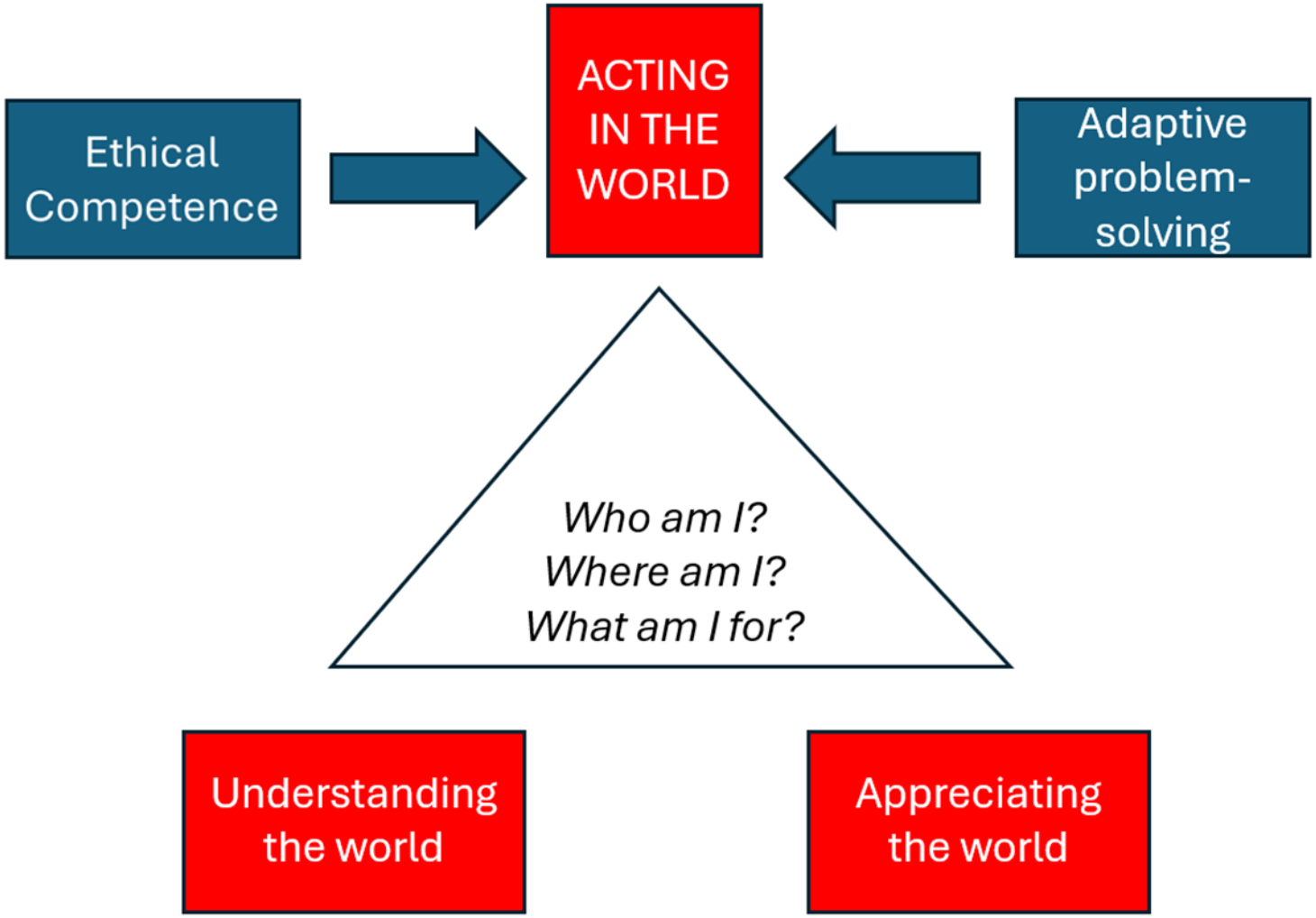
Will human societies stay intact? Deep analysis of large data could accelerate increased social mobility and reduced inequality. But we already see how AI is fuelling the misuse of power in improper sale of data; the growth of hidden surveillance; interference in democratic processes; fraud, theft and extortion; and the creation and distribution of false and misleading information.

Will agency move from humans to robots? AI offers opportunities to enhance productivity and innovation. But workers in many sectors and at all levels may see the rapid automation of their skills, leading at best to a period of painful disruption.

The future significance of AI

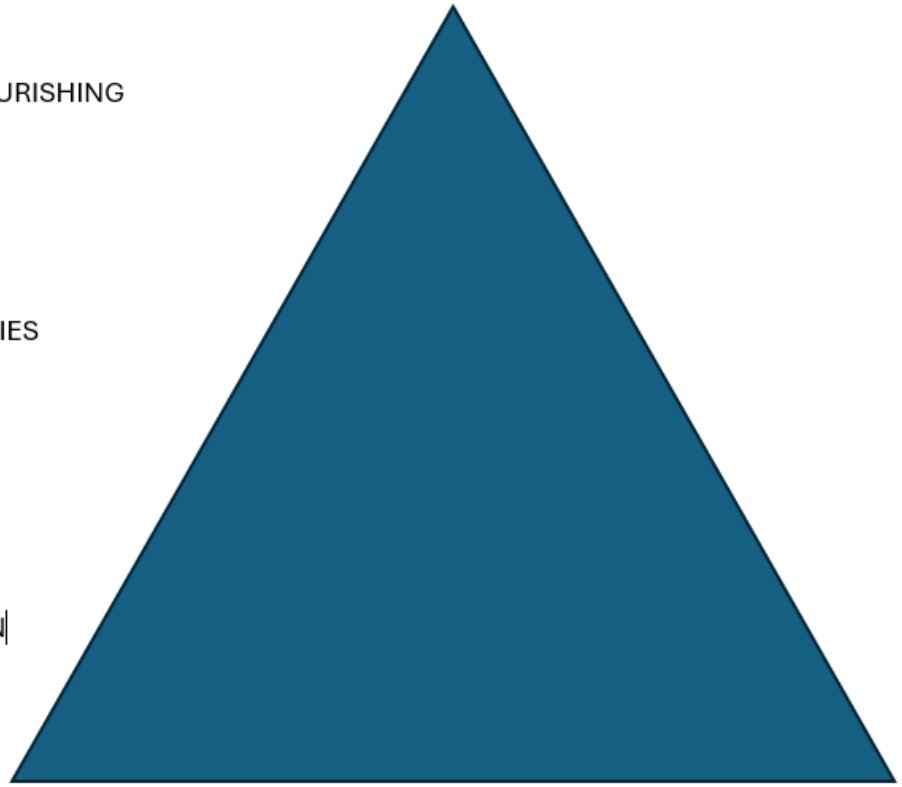


The likelihood of General Purpose AI and superintelligence, whether achieved in a few decades or longer, poses challenges to humanity of a different order. Education for human flourishing, in broadening and rebalancing human capabilities, restoring meaning to human lives and creating fair and sustainable models for the future, may be our best shot at controlling it – and so securing "the attainment of a civilisational trajectory that leads to the compassionate and jubilant use of humanity's cosmic endowment" (Bostrom, 2014)



Education for human flourishing: competencies

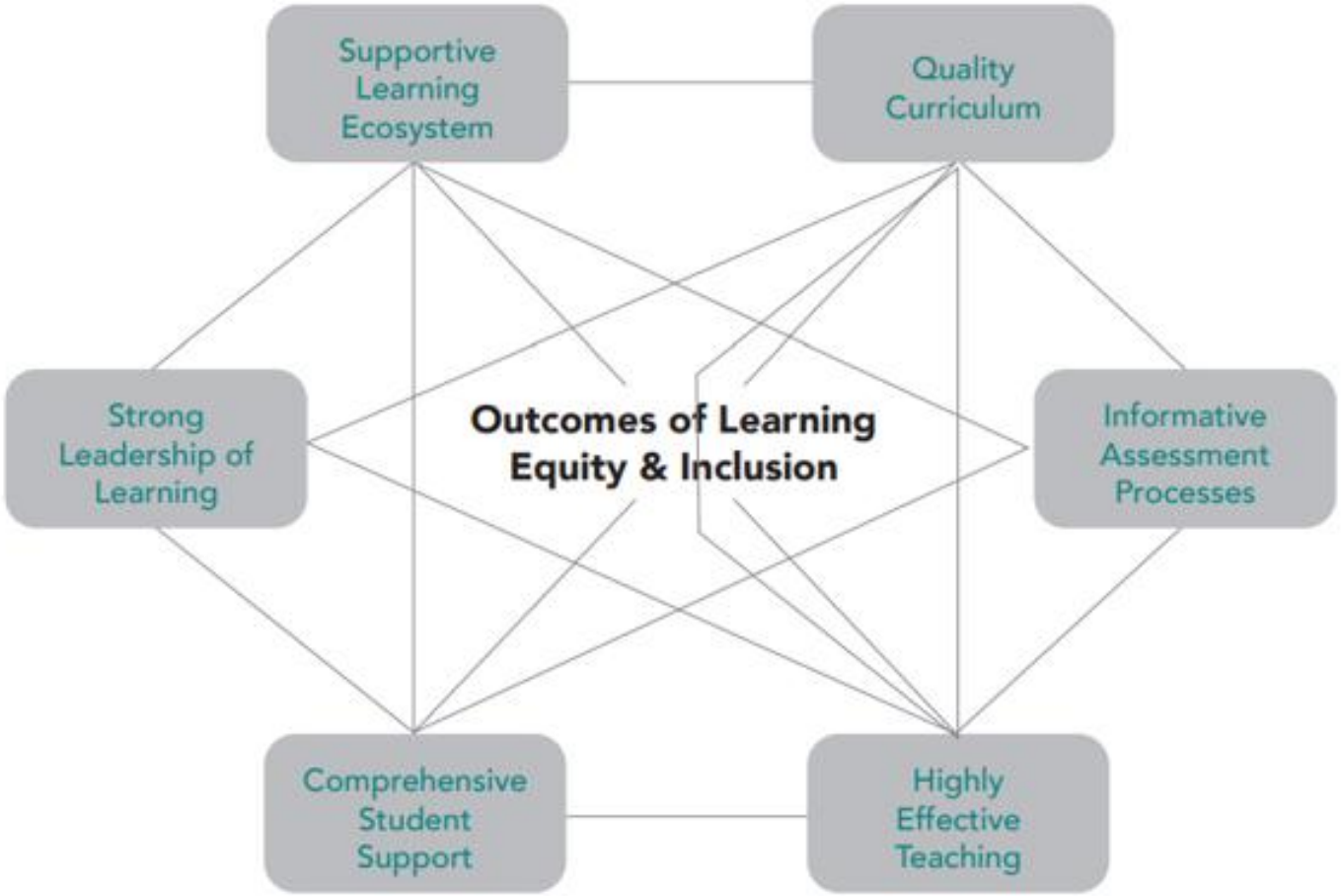
Education for human flourishing: architecture



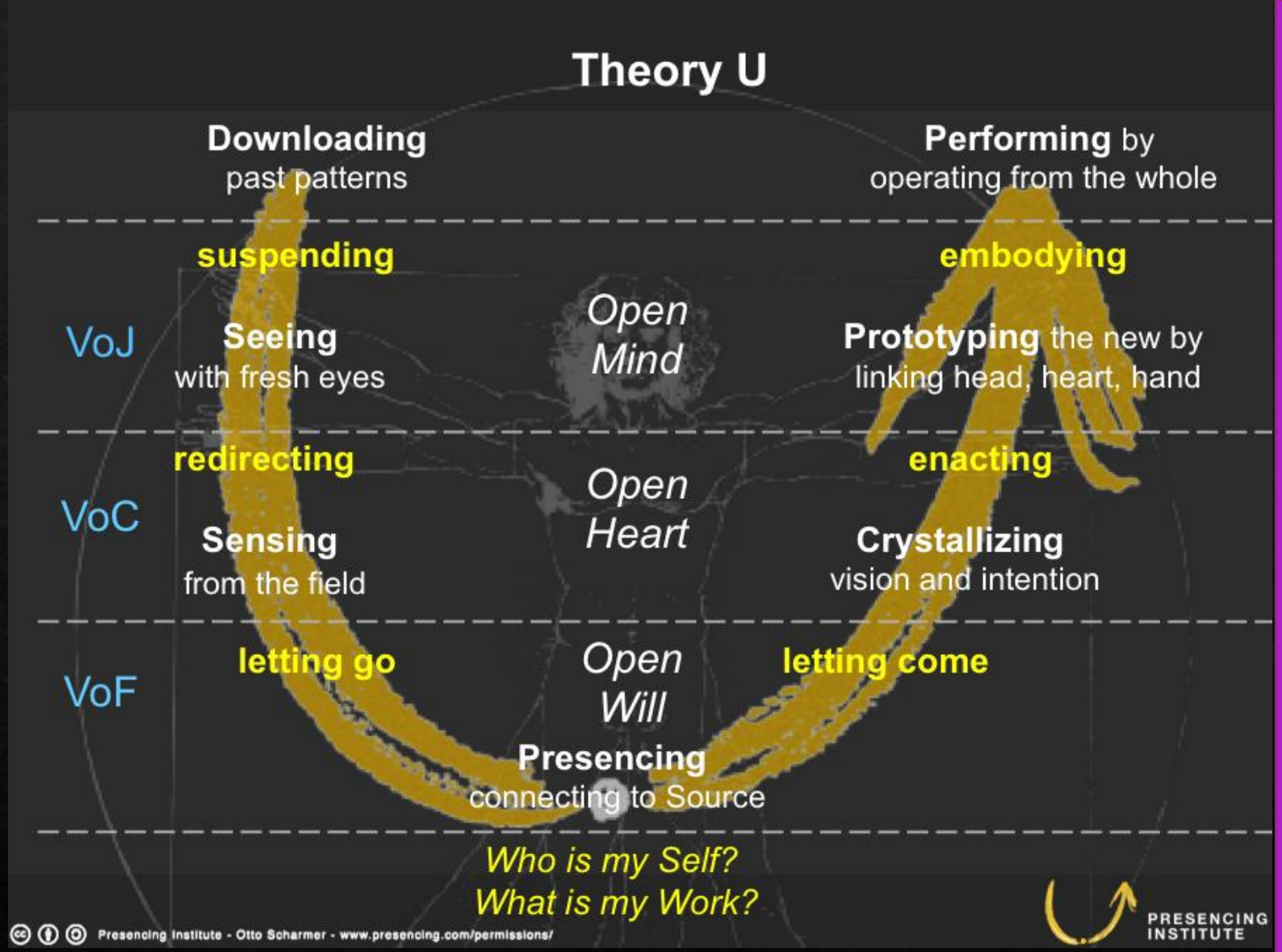
Happiness, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment

Adaptive problem-solving, Ethical competence, Understanding the world, Appreciating the world, Acting in the world

Foundational literacies, social and emotional skills, well-being factors



Education for human flourishing: systems



Education for human flourishing systems

Transformation



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